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S E R M O N,

PREACHED

IN THE CATHEDRAL CHURCH OF ST. JAMES,

TORONTO, CANADA,

ON

THE 15TH DAY OF MAY, 1842,

BY

THE HONOURABLE AND RIGHT REVEREND

THE LORD BISHOP OF TORONTO,

J. Strachen.

ON THE DEATH OF

ELIZABETH EMILY,

WIFE OF

THE HONOURABLE MR. JUSTICE HAGERMAN.

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M.DCCC.XLII.

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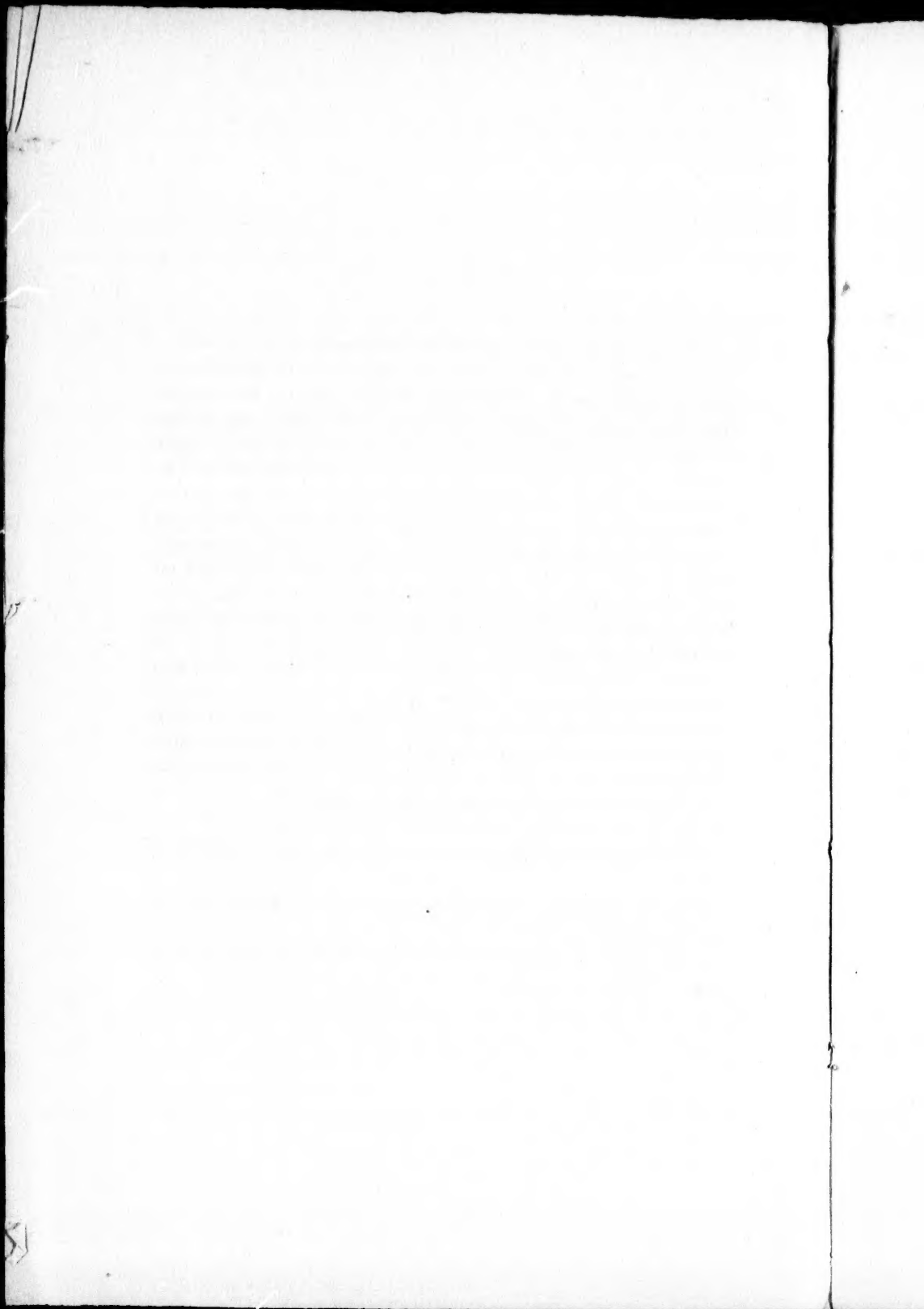
"The extremely sudden death of Mrs. Hagerman, who was cut off after an illness of only a few hours, cast a deep gloom over the inhabitants of this city, on the morning of Wednesday, the 11th instant. The deceased lady was a native of England, and had not resided many years in this Province: but she had lived amongst us quite long enough to render herself respected and endeared by her cheerful and charitable virtues. In administering to the necessities of her poorer fellow-creatures, she was ever active, and loved to be so engaged: amidst her immediate friends and connexions, her departure has caused the most intense grief; and in losing her,—we speak from our own personal knowledge,—the Church has lost one, who was the means of sending God's Holy Volume, and various religious publications written in accordance with the spirit of the Book of Life, into the remote and spiritually neglected settlements of the Province. It was but on the Monday preceding her death,—alas! that it should be the last kindly attention paid to our numerous requests,—that she furnished us with a valuable parcel of Bibles and Tracts, to assist an excellent Clergyman in his endeavors to rescue a long-neglected Protestant settlement from a state of religious destitution."—*Extracted from THE CHURCH Newspaper of Saturday the 14th May 1842.*

The lamented deceased was in the 38th year of her age.

"—— Though the Righteous be prevented with death; yet shall he be in rest.

"For honourable age is not that which standeth in length of time, nor that is measured by numbers of years.

"But Wisdom is the grey hair unto men, and an unspotted life is old age."—*Wisdom of Solomon, ch. iv., verses 7, 8, & 9.*



S E R M O N,

&c.

Watch, for ye know neither the day nor the hour wherein the Son of Man
cometh.—St. MATT. xxv. 13.

THE motives of our holy religion are designed to operate with the most powerful efficacy upon human nature. The certainty of death—its near, yet unexpected, approach—the impossibility of our doing any thing farther towards our salvation beyond the grave—our ignorance of the hour—are all considerations well adapted to affect the heart and to influence the understanding. We have only to admit them to feel their great weight and importance—and it is only by forgetting and banishing them from our thoughts and remembrance, that we can reconcile ourselves to carelessness, to folly, and to guilt.

Our blessed Lord was made, in all things, like his brethren, and is represented in Scripture, as stirring up his mind by the same motives that ought to influence ours. He freely admits the weight of the consideration for doing his work, that the time for doing it would be soon over, and declares that he himself was ignorant, as well as the Angels, of the time when the Day of Judgment will be, that in this also he might feel as we do and set us an example. “But of that day, and that hour, knoweth no man, no not the Angels which are in heaven, neither the Son, but the Father.”

Now if our Saviour thought it meet thus to stir up his own mind to diligence, by calling to his remembrance the uncertainty of human life, and of the hour wherein the Son of Man

cometh to put an end to all our employments, much more does it become his disciples to keep that awful event ever before them, inasmuch as we are under stronger temptations to forget it, and less able to resist them. Let us then listen, while God speaks to us of our latter end by his Word and by his Providence, and lay it to our hearts. It is our duty to repeat the voice of his words, and to interpret the language of his dispensations. It is, indeed, an essential part of the work of his standing ministry to awaken and stir up and keep alive the fact that we know not the time when the Son of Man cometh.

The serious remembrance of death, is not only a short, but an obvious, lesson, urging us to the practice of every virtue; and, though familiar to us all, is nevertheless so frequently startling as to compel our deepest attention. Where indeed is the temptation, that the proper consideration of death, with its awful consequences, will not enable us to subdue? Can we be false and unfaithful in the trust committed to us, while we see the hour approaching, when we must give an account of our stewardship? Can we be quarrelsome, litigious, and unjust, when about to appear before the God of Peace and Mercy? Does not the solemn thought extinguish animosity in our hearts, and urge the speedy necessity of reconciliation and love? Shall we harbour resentment against those who have injured and spitefully used us, with that tribunal before our eyes, where we have so many sins that need to be forgiven? Can the lovers of pleasure persist in the indulgence of criminal desires, when they view near at hand that abyss into which they are plunging? Does not the view of an open grave, and the thought of lying down there, extinguish in the heart every carnal and corrupt affection? Have those who are guilty of such iniquities forgotten that they are soon to die? Alas! such have forgotten, and oh! that we could awaken in their minds the remembrance of this certain truth, then might we hope for a thorough reformation in their hearts and lives. Shall they who are possessed of this world's goods,

and have it now in their power to shew kindness, harden their hearts against poverty and affliction, with that moment before their eyes, which will strip them of all their worldly possessions, and leave an everlasting regret if they have not shewn mercy? Shall they who are poor in this world, and must look to the hand of charity for a scanty maintenance, fret and repine, while the time is at hand, when their cares about food and raiment shall be over?

There is no event so interesting to us as our departure from this world. It is a change so great, and comprehensive, that it includes every other. Man knoweth not his time: it is therefore his wisdom to be always ready, and to prepare himself, even in security, for trouble, and more especially for his departure from this world, by making his peace with God, and trusting in his Redeemer.

Very few persons die at the time which their imaginations may have suggested. Death overtakes most persons as a thief in the night, for no man knows at what hour the Son of Man cometh: and while we are kept in perpetual uncertainty respecting this event, it is the greatest vanity to boast of our fore-knowledge of any other, because, when this arrives, our interest in the present world ceases. All that is done under the Sun—all the joys and sorrows, and successes and disappointments, which take place among men, are then, in regard to us, events that happen in another world. All inferences in regard to the termination of individual life are fruitless and vain, and, therefore, no person can justify himself in deferring till tomorrow his preparation for that eternal world, which may be the first thing that presents itself to his awakening faculties.

God, in his wisdom and mercy, has hid from us the day of our death. Were we in possession of such knowledge, the affairs of life would be interrupted, and the sufferings of death endured, through the fear and apprehension attending its visible approach, a thousand-fold. On the other hand, how prone would many be to love the world above all things, and forget the concerns of the future,—how strongly tempted to delay

repentance! The distant view of eternity would weaken the influence of these great motives, which are drawn from the happiness and misery of that unseen state. For if so many abuse the uncertainty of life to wicked purposes, how much more would they abuse the knowledge of distant certainty? While, at a distance, men would fall into the greatest rashness and presumption, gratifying their appetites and passions without restraint, and eluding the force of serious convictions, in the vain hope that they had time enough to prepare for eternity. Now the uncertainty of death should operate as a solemn admonition from God to perpetual watchfulness, and not to leave undone that which, at a dying hour, would become a source of inconsolable wretchedness, for there is no possibility of future change in eternity. "Watch, therefore, for we know neither the day nor the hour when the Son of Man cometh." "If the good man of the house had known at what hour the thief would come, he would have watched, and not suffered his house to be broken through." Stand, therefore, having your loins girt, your lamps burning, and be yourselves like unto men that wait for the coming of the Lord.

God deals with us, in the economy of his Providence and grace, as rational and accountable beings, whose great business it is to work out our salvation with fear and trembling. And accordingly we are capable of looking forward, and of making provision for coming exigencies; and, above all, of appreciating the infinite importance which attaches to our change of worlds. It is an event which is continually suspended over our heads, as the inevitable circumstance attending our destiny, while we remain in total ignorance of the time of its arrival. And how excellent is this arrangement adapted to fix and concentrate our attention on this momentous event, and to cause it to enter into all our plans and counsels! It is therefore our wisdom constantly to remember our latter end: to be always ready, and not to suffer that day to come upon us like a thief in the night.

The future world is placed, by the mercy of God, exactly in that light which is most for our benefit. Had it been laid more open to our view, religion would cease to be a voluntary service, for its glorious objects brought so near us would compel our attention. Were we distinctly to hear the voices, like thunderings, within the vail, we should immediately become deaf to every earthly sound; religion would be no longer a matter of choice, and faith no longer a virtue; self-denial would be impossible, for future interests would swallow up the present. But it has pleased God to make this a state of trial and probation, and he has therefore thrown over the heavenly world a great degree of obscurity. Our Lord hath indeed brought life and immortality to light by the Gospel, and has raised our hopes to the highest pitch, by investing the future state with unspeakable grandeur, elevation and glory, but he has not explicitly taught us in what that state will consist. "It doth not yet appear what we shall be," but we know enough of futurity to make it the great object of our attention and desire, although it does not so press upon our organs as to render us insensible to present scenes and interests.

The subject of our meditation has been suggested by the severe loss which this congregation has sustained in the unlooked for departure of one of its most promising and devout members—an awful dispensation, for which we were altogether unprepared, and which has cast a melancholy gloom over the whole city, and excited the most lively sentiments of tenderness and regret. The death of this bright ornament of our community has left a sad blank which can never be supplied, and is justly felt to be a public as well as a private calamity.

I have known her a lovely flower in the spring-time of her bloom and beauty, and in the commencement of her summer dignity and strength, which were not permitted to come to maturity. I loved her as a daughter,—it is therefore with no common sorrow that I lament her loss. Alas! only a very few hours intervened between her death and the full possession

of her mental powers, and the energies of that warm and benevolent heart, which was ever ready to satisfy the calls of compassion, and the requirements of religion. Her summons to the tribunal of heaven was indeed sudden, but we have good reason to believe that it found her with her lamp burning,—with the testimony of a good conscience, and with that righteousness which proceeds from justifying Faith in the Redeemer.

It pleased God to bless her with many gifts and few afflictions, yet during a protracted and painful illness, which she experienced some years ago, her religious principles were fully tried. She bore her sufferings, which were very severe, with a patience and fortitude and resignation to the will of God which was truly edifying, and when her disorder appeared to threaten a fatal termination, she gave ample proof that her sole reliance was on the merits of a crucified Saviour. But indeed her whole walk shewed that on religious subjects she felt deeply,—that her Faith was steadfast, and her hope firm, joyful, and rooted in charity. Guided by these virtues, and that grace which can alone inspire them, we are warranted in trusting, that she has so passed the waves of this troublesome world, as finally to attain the land of everlasting life.

She possessed a spirit of the most unaffected and felicitous kindness towards the poor and destitute, many of whom were the special objects of her care; and of the vigour with which she could act to supply their necessities, we had recently a striking instance in her untiring labour, and energetic persuasiveness, by which an association was set on foot to make clothing for the poor, at the commencement of the last winter. Many of her charities and deeds of compassion will never be known, for she concealed them from the world; but not a few will miss them, as well as that kindness and tenderness of heart which disposed her to sympathise with the wants and infirmities, the joys and sorrows of the needy and the unfortunate. In truth, her warm and affectionate soul vibrated, like a well-strung harp, to the voice of distress, and responded to every touch of benevolence.

To society she brought a gracefulness of manner and a winning sweetness of deportment which were unwearied in promoting the comfort and happiness of all around her; nor did she hesitate for a moment to put herself to trouble and inconvenience, when she could add to the innocent enjoyment of life. Various are the ways in which God tries the spirits of his servants, and perhaps part of her trials consisted in the love and esteem in which she was held by all her friends and neighbours. The young delighted to lean on the charm of her playful cheerfulness and sweetness of disposition. To them her kindness and complacency knew no bounds, and while she had sufficient firmness to resist all solicitation where conscience spoke, she would yield to their entreaties with the most engaging cordiality when it was in her power to contribute to their harmless enjoyment. Is it then wonderful that they should feel intensely the awful dispensation that has called her so suddenly to her proper home, and that her memory should be consecrated by tears, which can only be thoroughly wiped away in that world where sorrow shall be no more?

In the discharge of those duties which belong to the relation of mother, wife, and daughter, she was sincere and conscientious, and in her temper and behaviour mild and gentle.

Towards her children she displayed on all occasions the most ardent affection, blended with wise and firm rules for the regulation of their conduct—rules dictated by a pious and strict regard to both their temporal and spiritual welfare. To them her house was a happy home, for her good sense laid no needless restraint upon that sprightliness, pleasantry and exuberance of spirits so natural to their years, while it preserved them within reasonable bounds.

Her love and gentleness as a wife softened all the troubles and cares of domestic life, and rendered the discharge of its various and necessary duties rather a source of gratification than of irksomeness or pain. Indeed her sweetness of disposition fastened the knot which affection had tied, and confirmed

the union which friendship had created. There was a pleasing rivalry in meeting and anticipating each other's desires, and hence the peace and happiness which blessed her family circle.

A more affectionate daughter can scarcely be imagined:— she was the youngest, and therefore the favourite, of her family, and was cherished from her earliest infancy with the fondest endearments of all its members. And when after her marriage it became her duty to cleave to her husband, her parting from her parents, whom she loved so tenderly, was a most painful trial, perhaps the most bitter that she had till that time experienced. But she trusted in a kind Providence that they should meet again.

After remaining in this country about six years she felt a longing desire to visit her parents. They are far advanced in the vale of years, and she began to fear that she might see them no more in the land of the living. It pleased God to vouchsafe her a prosperous voyage, and a most happy meeting with the authors of her being, and with them to enjoy many happy months; but the day of separation approached, and the hour of bidding a last farewell. They knew that they would never again meet on this side the grave, but her parents looked forward to their own, not to her, early departure. Dark are the ways of Providence, and mysterious the will of heaven! She has been taken away in the strength of womanhood, and they in the feebleness of age are left to weep. O Lord, give them faith to bow in meek submission to this heavy visitation!

No person could have been taken from this society that could have left a greater number of sorrowing friends, or a more afflicted house of mourning. Justly may her weeping children and consort say that the delight of their eyes has been taken away, and yet deep as their grief must be, it is not without hope, nor even without cause of rejoicing, when they reflect on her faith in Christ and her works of charity and mercy, the natural fruits of that saving principle. And desolate as they must for a time feel, they will, I trust, derive

strength from the principles by which she was guided, and find consolation in the happy lot, which the object of their affection enjoys, and endure with Christian patience their bereavement, in humble submission to the will of their heavenly Father.

Let not this just and sincere tribute to departed excellence be imputed to the partiality of one, who has beheld her for so many years with parental affection. What I have said is more than confirmed by the regrets, and tears of all who knew her, and are able to appreciate her worth.

But while we mourn for the dead, let our sorrow be enlivened with the hope of immortality. We cannot believe that they who were so lately the objects of our tenderest concern have ceased to exist;—that their love and affection are for ever extinguished;—that we shall never behold them any more. We shall, my brethren, again behold all those whom we love. To us immortality is opened,—we welcome it without a doubt. We embrace, with gratitude to the Revealer, a doctrine which restores to us our relatives, our friends, and companions. We see them reviving in another state, adorned with other faculties, which are about to act in another world.

Such a contemplation fills our soul with joy in believing: it longs for a happier existence, and from its pure aspirations towards the fountain of all being, it becomes as it were all prayer and all praise; it also becomes all faith, because it confidently leans upon that Saviour who made all worlds, and who has revealed the blissful secrets of our lofty destiny,—that faith which, sublime and pure in Christ, extracts divine knowledge from all his words and works, and purifies and exalts our nature as we pursue the holy vision.

This faith, this filial and holy boldness in God through Christ, gives reality to the things not seen, and prompts to the noble ambition of rising above the things of earth to the glories of eternity, glories which speak not of man, but of God; such a faith abstracts the soul from this tabernacle of clay, and enables it to wing its flight to the realms of eternal day.

Our connexion, my brethren, with the world of spirits is greatly strengthened by the removal from this world of those we love. In that land of felicity, which they now inhabit, they remember us with affection. They were our companions, our comfort, our support, in this fleeting and troublesome world, and although the joys of pilgrims must be transient, yet, if we follow them with holy and devout affections, and ascend by the same faith to the world of spirits, they will still continue to be our friends and companions, and our support while we remain in this the house of our pilgrimage.

